

PEOPLE - WINQUIST

The Clipper Visits... **Elaine Winquist**

By MARTHA HIMES

When discussing her recent trip to France, Duxbury Free Library director Elaine Winquist sounds a little wistful for a simpler professional life, one perhaps that does not involve deep budget cuts and crowded parking lots.

Winquist, 55, is a Francophile who majored in the language at Pennsylvania State University. In May, she and her son Chris, 16, visited Duxbury's new sister library, the American



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Library in Angers, France. Angers, about an hour and a half southwest of Paris, is also the birthplace of Cointreau liqueur. The American Library possesses the largest English language collection in western France.

"It was good for me to go over there and visit their library, because I had forgotten that the pace of life is so much slower there and their staff is smaller than mine, so it was no pressure, let's just do what's fun," she said.

Winqvist's past year at the Duxbury Free Library has not been that relaxed. Due to the budget cuts at March's Town Meeting, she worried that the library would not only have to end Sunday hours, but would also lose state certification.

Parking has recently become a hot topic at the library as well, as construction has reduced the school's parking facilities. On days when there are games in the sports fields, library parking is tight. Disgruntled patrons, unable to find a parking space, have complained to Winqvist, but there is nothing she can do.

"I've been told by the town that this is municipal parking, it's not library parking," she explained.



However, luckily for Winqvist, relief is certain for the former and imminent for the latter.

In April, the Board of Library Commissioners relaxed the certification requirements for libraries struggling under the state's current fiscal crisis. The reduced requirements will enable Winqvist to keep the library open on Sundays by moving funds from the materials budget to salaries, and the library will remain certified.

"It's an interesting dilemma, because the state and the Commissioners think they're doing libraries a favor by relaxing the standards, but most of my director friends and I don't want the standards relaxed. Keep those standards high and make us meet them...Part of these regulations are in place to force town governments to support their public libraries," she said.

Certification, partially based on the level of funding the library receives from the town, is critical. Without it, libraries cannot take part in interlibrary loans and are ineligible for state and federal grants.

And on the parking issue, the schools have told Winqvist that new lots behind Alden and the performing arts center due to open next fall should resolve the parking crunch.

Winqvist, a former teacher, has been a librarian for twenty years. While teaching, she worked nights in the public library. She enjoyed the work so much she decided to study

for her master's in library science, which she completed at Simmons College.

After several years as a corporate librarian, she joined the Westwood Public Library, where she rose to the position of Head of Technical Services. She was hired by Duxbury's reference department shortly after she, her husband Peter, and children Chris and Alexis, 23, moved here from Westwood in 1998. Two years later, she secured the vacant director position following the departure of former director Joanne Lamothe.

About a year into Winqvist's tenure, the American Library's director, Phoebe Marshall-Raimbeau, began shopping around for a sister library.

"She wants a connection for all of the expatriate Americans that are over there. She said, 'I have a ton of people who just want to write to people in the United States,'" Winqvist said.

Duxbury competed for the coveted sistership against a number of other libraries, including Woods Hole and the Nantucket Athenaeum. When Winqvist told Marshall-Raimbeau that Duxbury had been the landing point for the French-American transatlantic cable, victory was ours.

The two librarians are establishing a teen pen-pal

program, planning visits, and working on a form of interlibrary loan by sending books and magazines across the Atlantic. Marshall-Raimbeau plans to visit this summer, and two of her patrons are planning a trip for next fall.

Winqvist loved her trip to Angers. She toured gardens, medieval fortresses and cathedrals and spent plenty of time visiting the American Library.

Thanks in part to our sister library, French culture is starting to permeate Duxbury. The Duxbury Cultural Alliance, of which the library is a part, has scheduled a "French Connection" event for September. And those perusing the library's video collection will notice our sister library's influence in the increased number of French movies.

"The library's seeing a huge influx of French videos," Winqvist said.

Noting the lack of an art cinema on the South Shore, the library director is focusing her video purchases on films that don't make it to local theaters or video stores.

"I like to get things for this collection that you can't run down the street and get," she said. "I'm a real film buff."

She would also like to start a petition to ask the Independence Mall Cinema to turn one of their many theaters over to foreign or independent movies. The library could promote the films with viewing and discussion groups.

"They could take one of their movie theaters and make it an art theater, to bring down all these films that are at the Brattle and the Newton theaters," Winqvist said. "You can't find a good art movie on the South Shore."

But now, thanks to our new transatlantic connection, you can in Duxbury.